

THE SEARCH AFTER HAPPINESS

NO. 3105

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 1908
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK

*“There be many that say, Who will shew us any good?
LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.”
Psalm 4:6*

THIS is a text which, by the rich assistance of the Holy Ghost, may serve as a touchstone to try our state. See, here are two classes of men, *the many*, panting after the good of this world, and *the few*, turning the eye of faith to their God, and begging that He would lift up the light of His countenance upon them.

I. Let us contemplate with sadness and with searching of heart, THE MANY—trembling lest we should find ourselves among the number.

“THE MANY,” what multitudes of thoughts cluster around these two words! The million-peopled city, the populous town, the wide-spread country, this isle, kingdoms, empires, continents, the world, all seem to issue forth like armies from the hundred-gated Thebes, at the mention of those two words, “The many.” Here we see the toiling peasant and his lordly squire, the artisan and the princely merchant, the courtier and the king, the young and the old, the learned and the unlearned, all gathered within the compass of a word.

And all that form this vast gathering of human souls are joining in one cry, and moving in one direction. This is a thought at which the faithful may well weep, for their cry is SELF, their course is SIN. Here and there are the chosen few struggling against the mighty tide, but the masses, the multitude still, as in the days of David, are hurrying along their mad career in search of a fancied good, and reaping the fruit of their futile search in disappointment, death, and hell.

O my hearer, are you like the dead fish floating with the stream, or are you, by constraining grace, drawn onward and upward to the bliss prepared for the elect? If a Christian, I beseech you to pause and admire the grace which has made you to differ. If your heart is right with God, I know you will confess that there is no intrinsic natural goodness in you, for like your friend the speaker, I doubt not that you are made to groan over a strong propensity within, which often tempts you to join in the world’s chase, and leave “the fountain of living waters” for the “broken cisterns” of earth, and therefore you will join with the preacher in singing—

*“’Tis all of free grace we were brought to obey,
While others were suffer’d to go
The road which, by nature, WE chose as our way,
Which leads to the regions of woe.”*

Come then, with me, and behold the evil and the folly of the world, listen to their never-ceasing cry, “Who will show us any good?”

Mark, first, *its sensual character*, “Who will SHOW us any good?” The world desires something which it may see, and taste, and handle. The joys of faith it does not understand. *We*, by divine grace, do not walk by sight, but the poor sons of earth must have visible, present, terrestrial joys. *We* have an unseen portion, an invisible inheritance, we have higher faculties, and nobler delights. We want no carnal showman to bid the puppet joys of time dance before us, we have seen “the king in his beauty,” and spiritually we behold “the land which is very far off.”

Let us pity the worldling, who is seeking water where there is none, in a salt land, a thirsty soil. Let us earnestly intercede for poor, short-sighted man, that he may yet have “the wisdom that is from above,” and the eye-salve of divine illumination, then will he no more seek for his happiness below, or look for pleasure in things of time and sense.

Take care, my hearer, that you do not suffer under the same delusion. Ever pray that you may be kept from hunting in the purlieu of sense, and fixing your affection on earthly things, for be sure of this, the roses of this world are covered with thorns, and her hives of honey, if broken open, will surround you with stinging remembrances, but not a drop of sweetness will they afford. Remember to lay to heart the words of a holy poet—

*“Nor earth, nor all the sky,
Can one delight afford;
No, not a drop of real joy,
Without Thy presence, Lord.”*

Notice next, *its indiscriminating nature*, “Who will show us ANY good?” The unregenerate mind has no discernment in its choice. One good is to it as desirable as another. Men easily allow toleration here. The intoxicating cup is the “good” of the winebibber, the indulgence of lust is the object of the voluptuary, gold is the miser’s god, and fame or power the choice of the ambitious. To most men, these are all “good” in their way, if not esteemed good morally, they are looked upon as forbidden fruits, only untasted because of the penalty, and not abhorred because of a real distaste.

O my hearer, have you sufficient judgment to see that *any* good will not suit you? Have you made an election of “solid joys and lasting pleasures,” and are the dainties of time tasteless to you? You are not like the bee, which can find her food in nettles and poisonous weeds, “The Rose of Sharon” is the flower of your choice, and “the Lily of the valley” is to you the perfection of beauty. No longer can you ask for ANY good, for you have found *the* one, the only good, and in HIM is such a fullness, such an abundance, that your song will ever be—

*“God is my all-sufficient good,
My portion and my choice;
In Him my vast desires are fill’d
And all my powers rejoice.”*

Remark attentively *the selfish nature of the question*, “Who will show US any good?” Here the poor man of this world is seeking for himself and his fellows, but not for God, or the good of others. He has no fear of God, nor any love, nor reverence for Him. Let but his barn be stored, his purse filled, his body fed, his senses gratified, and the great Maker and bounteous Giver may be forgotten.

What cares he whether there be a God, or whether He be worshipped or no, to him Venus, and Brahma, and Woden, and JEHOVAH are all alike gods. He cares not for the living and true God, he lets others have religion, to him it would be a weariness and a labor. Or if he puts on the outward guise of religion, he is but a Gibeonite in the temple, “a hewer of wood and drawer of water,” Selfish even in his worship, selfish in his praises and his prayers.

But we, beloved, are, we trust, no longer lovers of self, we have become adorers of God, and purely from gratitude we pay our glad homage at His throne. We do not now put self foremost, we wish to experience a self-annihilation, a death to self, we have learned to sacrifice our own desires on the altar of divine love, and now one passion concentrates our power, and truly we exclaim—

*“Christ is my light, my life, my care,
My blessed hope, my heavenly prize;
Dearer than all my passions are,
My limbs, my bowels, or my eyes.”*

Observe also, *the futility of the inquiry*, “WHO will show us any good?” Echo might answer, “Who?” Where lives the fortunate discoverer, the man who has stumbled on this pearl of price unknown? Ah, sinner! call again, like the priests of Baal, for there is neither hearing nor answering. Go to those Arcadian groves of poetry, and find them a fiction, taste the nectar of the epicure, and find it gall, lie on a bed of down, and loathe the weakness which effeminacy engenders, surround yourself with wealth, and learn its powerlessness to ease the mind, ay, wear a royal crown, and mourn a king’s uneasy head.

Try all, like the preacher of wisdom, open each cabinet in the palace of pleasure, and ransack each corner of her treasure house. Have you found the long-sought good? Ah, no! Your joys, like bubbles, have dissolved at your touch, or like the schoolboy’s butterfly, have been crushed by the blow which won them.

Pause here and realize the emptiness of sublunary joys. Entreat the Spirit of all grace to reveal to your soul the hollowness of terrestrial baubles. Take earth, and as Quarles has it, “*Tinnit inane*”—it sounds because it is empty. Despise the world, rate its jewels at a low price, estimate its gems as paste, and its solidities as dreams. Think not that you shall thus lose pleasure, but rather remember the saying of Chrysostom, “Contemn riches, and you shall be rich, contemn glory, and you shall be glorious, contemn injuries, and you shall be a conqueror, contemn rest, and you shall gain rest, contemn earth, and you shall gain heaven.”

Here may you and I close our review of the foolish multitude by learning the three lessons spoken of by Bonaventure, “The multitude of those that are damned, the small number of the saved, and the vanity of transitory things.”

II. A happier sight now awaits us. Yonder is a company whose constant utterance is widely different from the inquiry of the many. These are THE FEW, not so many as the moralist and formalist believe them, but at the same time not so few as bigotry in her narrowness would make them, for God has His hidden thousands whose knees have never bowed to Baal.

These *seek* not a good, for they have found it, they ask not a question, but they breathe a prayer, they apply not to mortals, but they address to their God this petition, “LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.”

Let us tarry on the very threshold of these words, and devoutly ask for divine searching, lest we should be deceived in our belief that this is our prayer. Let us not take the words lightly on our unhallowed lips, lest we ask for our own damnation. Perhaps, my hearer, if the light of God’s countenance were at once to shine upon you, your heart is so far from God, so full of hatred to Him, that it would suddenly destroy you, for remember, He is “a consuming fire.”

Let us, however, if the answer of conscience and the inward witness are agreed to give us hope, behold the countenance of our God.

For first, *it is a reconciled countenance*. “Though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedest me.” “I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee.” The anger of God towards believers in Jesus is forever appeased, they are so perfect, in the righteousness of Christ, that He sees no spot of sin in them. Though of “purer eyes than to behold evil,” He does yet regard poor sinners with affection, and towards you, my Christian brother or sister, He has no sentiments but those of unmingled love. Think of your glorious condition, reconciled! Beloved! Adopted!

Next, *it is a cheering countenance*. The smile of a fond friend will nerve us to duty, the approving glance of a wise man will give us courage in trial, but the looks of God, the smiles of our Father who is in heaven, these are better than the applause of a colossal audience, or the shouts of an empire of admirers. Give me the comforts of God, and I can well bear the taunts of men.

Let me lay my head on the bosom of Jesus, and I fear not the distraction of care and trouble. If my God will give me ever the light of His smile, and the glance of His approval, it is enough for me. Come on, foes, persecutors, fiends, ay, Apollyon himself, for “the LORD God is a sun and shield.” Gather, you

clouds and environ me, I carry a sun within, blow, wind of the frozen North, I have a fire of living coals *within*, yes, death, slay me, but I have another life—a life in the light of God’s countenance.

Let us not forget another sweet and precious consideration. *It is a peculiar countenance*, from the fact that *it is transforming, changing the beholder into its own likeness*. I gaze on beauty, yet may be myself deformed. I admire light, and may yet dwell in darkness, but if the light of the countenance of God rests upon me, I shall become like Him, the lineaments of His visage will be on me, and the great outlines of His attributes will be mine. Oh, wondrous glass, which thus renders the beholder lovely! Oh, admirable mirror, which reflects not self with its imperfections, but gives a perfect image to those that are uncomely!

May you and I, beloved, so fix our contemplations upon Jesus, and all the persons of the Godhead, that we may have our unholiness removed, and our depravity overcome. Happy day when we shall be like Him, but the only reason of it will be that, then “we shall see him as he is.” Oh, could we look less to the smile and favor of man, and more to the regard and notice of heaven, how far should we be in advance of what we are! Our puny spirits would become gigantic in stature, and our feeble faith would, through grace, wax mighty. We should no longer be the sport of temptation, and the pliant servants of our corruptions. O our God, amid our folly and our sin, we turn to You with strong desire, crying out, “Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us!”

We will only note, in concluding our brief but instructive musings, that *God’s countenance is unchanging*. The light may seem to vary, but the face is the same. Our God is the immutable Father of lights. He does not love *now*, and cast away in the *future*. Never did His love begin, and never can it cease. It is *from* eternity, and shall be *to* eternity.

The things of time are mutable, confessedly and constantly so, but the things of eternity are ever the same. Away with the horrid suggestion that God may forget and forsake His own children. Oh, no! the face which was once radiant with love, is not now beclouded with wrath, the heart which overflowed with affection, is not now filled with anger, great as my sins have been, they are not so great as His love, the file of my backsliding shall not be permitted to divide the golden links of the chains of His mercy.

If my gracious Lord and Savior has assured me that my name was always enrolled among the sons of Zion, then “the powers of darkness” cannot “erase those everlasting lines.” Go, poor menial of Satan, pursue your weary drudgery, go seek the unsteady will-o’-the-wisp of carnal delights, but I have a surer joy, a substantial happiness beyond your reach. My hearer, it will be well with you if you can pity *the many*, and join with *the few*, singing—

*“Turn, then, my soul, unto thy rest;
The merits of thy great High Priest
Have bought thy liberty:
Trust in His efficacious blood,
Nor fear thy banishment from God,
Since Jesus died for thee.”*

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 66, ROMANS 8:1-9

PSALM Chapter 66. Verses 1-2. *Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious.*

In a company of advanced saints, silence may be sometimes profitable. The first verse of the previous psalm should read, according to the Hebrew, “Praise is silent for thee, O God, in Zion.” Full-grown saints may have their times of waiting in silence before the Lord, but when the heathen are to be brought in, and when new hearts are to be taught new songs, then there must be a noise, and not merely

a noise, but a noise that is full of joy, “Make a joyful noise unto God all ye lands.” This should be the chief point about it, that it should be a joyful noise.

Many of the newly invented tunes which have put the good old tunes out of favor, appear to have been made to rattle through the hymn as quickly as possible, as though the composer had written, “Let us praise God at express speed, and get it done; and the quicker, the better.” But I prefer those tunes in which we can sometimes repeat the words, and roll them under the tongue until our heart gets thoroughly saturated with the spirit of them.

“Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands,” but let that joyful noise be orderly, not like the shouts of those who cry around the car of Juggernaut. Let it be joyful singing unto the Lord, “Sing forth the honour of his name.” God is worthy of the highest honor, so let our praise of Him be given in such a way that it shall really honor Him.

“Make his praise glorious.” It is only giving back to God what rightly belongs to Him when we give Him glory, and it is our highest earthly glory to be giving glory to God, we are never so near to the condition of the glorified saints above as when we are, with heart, and soul, and voice, glorifying God.

3. *Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works!*

Our praises should be directed to God, “Say unto God.” Our hymns should be a form of speaking unto the Most High, and an ascription unto Him of His own glory. The first attribute of God that influences men is the attribute of power, which fills them with terror of His awful majesty and might. Afterwards, they perceive more of His love, and goodness, and wisdom, and other attributes, but at first—ay, and perhaps at last—there is a time in which there is much solemn stately music in this utterance, “How terrible art thou in thy works!”

3-4. *Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. All the earth shall worship thee; and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name.*

From the marginal reading of the third verse, it appears that God’s enemies will only “yield feigned obedience” to Him, but whether the submission is feigned or real, it shall not be possible for any man or any power finally to resist His omnipotence, and the day shall come when all the earth shall worship Him, and sing unto Him.

4. *Selah.*

Here is a little pause for the lifting up of the heart and of the strain, and well there may be, for what a joyful thing it is to think of all the earth worshipping God and singing unto Him! I know of no topic that is more calculated to excite the admiring gratitude of God’s servants than the prospect of the universal supremacy of our God and of His Christ.

5-6. *Come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doing toward the children of men. He turned the sea into dry land:*

You must often have noticed that the sweet singers of Israel are never singing very long unto God without mentioning that wonderful deliverance that He wrought at the Red Sea. What God did when He brought His people out of Egypt will be the subject of joyous and grateful song unto God forever, for even in heaven “they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.” The Red Sea as the grand type of redemption, and the Lamb as the great Worker of redemption are joined together in that triumphant song of “them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name.”

Here the psalmist sings of what God did for His people at the Red Sea, “He turned the sea into dry land:”

6. *They went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him.*

Perhaps some of you say, “But we were not there.” No, we were not personally there, but do you not remember what the prophet Hosea says about God meeting with Jacob at Bethel? It is written, “There he spake with us.” We were not personally there, yet believers have been everywhere in the Bible where other representative believers have been before them. “No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private

interpretation.” What God spoke to any one of His people, He has spoken to all of whom that one was typical.

Paul tells us that the Lord has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,” yet it was to Joshua that He said that, but as He said it to Joshua, He virtually said it to me, for I am a believer even as he was. All the promises belong to us who are in Christ Jesus, for the heavenly inheritance is left to all the spiritual seed, and if we are in the Lord’s family, we shall share alike with all the rest of the children.

“There did we rejoice in him.” Then, if we rejoiced in the Lord there, let us rejoice in Him here. Brethren and sisters in Christ, let us rest assured that when our turn to go through the sea shall come, we shall find that the Lord has “turned the sea into dry land” for us, whether it is a sea of troubles or the sea of death.

“They went through the flood on foot,” and so shall we. The God who made a way for them through the sea, virtually made a way for us also, for the army of God is one, and when the first ranks of the innumerable host passed through the flood, the army itself began to pass through, and that army can never be divided. So we are passing through the flood at this moment, and rejoicing in the God who cleaves the sea in twain to make a highway for His people.

7. *He rules by his power forever;*

What He did in the past, He is still doing in the present, and He will do in the future.

7. *His eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves.*

The rebellious may for a while exalt themselves, but they will, sooner or later be pulled down. These eagles may fly as high as they will, but God’s arrow can always reach them. The Lord pulled down the haughty Pharaoh from his throne, but He lifted up the people whom the proud monarch had trodden down and oppressed. The Lord overthrew the hosts of Egypt, but as for His people, He led them forth like sheep, and guided them through the wilderness, even as He is doing at this very moment.

7. *Selah.*

That is, pause again, and lift up the heart and the sacred strain too, and when all the strings of your heart and of your harp are screwed up, then go on with your music again.

8-9. *O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.*

I do bless God for this verse, and as many of you as have found it true should also praise and bless Him. Observe the two things that are mentioned here—living and standing, “Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.” There are some who have a certain standing in the church, and who keep up their reputation among their fellow members, yet they are not spiritually alive. It is a dreadful thing to be standing, and yet not living, like those in Sardis who were only living in name.

Then there are those who are living, but not standing—at least not standing fast. They are often caught tripping, and falling, and wounding themselves. They go with broken bones on their way towards heaven by reason of their many falls. But what a blessing it is to be kept both living and standing, and what reason there is to bless God for this great mercy—not congratulating ourselves on our steadfastness, and being exalted and proud, but magnifying the Lord for His grace in granting to us this double blessing—living and standing!

10. *For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.*

That is, with fierce furnaces, and with carefully graduated heat, for silver needs delicate refining. Christ still sits as the Refiner of silver, patiently watching until the process is complete.

11. *Thou broughtest us into the net;*

Did not our enemies entangle us? Oh, yes, but God often uses our enemies to carry out His divine purposes. He over-rules *all* things, so, when you are caught in the net, do not sit down, and say that such and such a person did it, or that the devil did it. No, but look to the Great First Cause. If You strike a dog with a stick, he tries to bite the stick because he does not know any better. But you are not a dog, so do not look at the second cause of your troubles, but learn to sing, as the psalmist does here, “Thou broughtest us into the net;”—

11. *Thou laidst affliction upon our loins.*

Not merely upon our backs, where we might be better able to bear it, but right on our loins, so that we were pressed and squeezed almost out of our very life.

12. *Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads;*

And when they mount their high horse, they crow and exalt themselves over God's afflicted servants.

12. *We went through fire and through water:*

They were subjected to a double test, for what fire does not burn, water will drown, yet God's people "went through fire and through water." There is no fire that can burn them. Nebuchadnezzar tried it, and failed. And there is no water that can drown them. Even though their bodies may be burned or drowned, their real selves shall still survive, and stand upon the sea of glass mingled with fire, triumphant over both fire and water.

12. *But thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.*

That is to say, the Lord brought the Israelites out from all manner of oppression under Pharaoh, and brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey. Nothing that Pharaoh could do could destroy the chosen nation, he tried to kill all the male children that were born, yet the Israelites still increased and multiplied, and they came at last to Canaan.

It will be just so with God's people in all times and all climes, they shall not die, but live, and shall ultimately come into that most wealthy of all places, even the heavenly and better Canaan. We cannot fully tell what joy awaits us there. We cannot measure the height of our joy by the depth of our sorrows, for after all, our sorrows are shallow, but the glory of God, which the saints are to share, is a depth unfathomable, a height that no man can measure. O Lord, bring us into that wealthy place right speedily if it is Your holy will!

13. *I will go into thy house with burnt offerings:*

Here is one worshipper breaking away from the rest—a child of God who is not satisfied by merely joining in the general praise of the whole assembly, so he brings his own personal thanksgiving and thank-offering to God.

Dear brother, dear sister, try to do this. Break away from all the rest of us, and say to the Lord, "I will go into thy house with burnt offerings."

13-15. *I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings,—*

"I will give thee the best that I have."

15. *With the incense of rams;*

Not only one of the best, but the best of two kinds of offerings.

15. *I will offer bullocks with goats.*

"I will present to Thee great services and smaller sacrifices. I will obey Thee in the great ordinances and in the lesser ordinances also. I will bring both bullocks and goats. I will make an all-round offering. I will try to do all that I can for Thee, my God, since Thou have done so much for me."

15. *Selah.*

Here the psalmist pauses again while the smoke of the sacrifice ascends, let us also pause, and meditate upon the better sacrifice which Christ offered for the sins of all who put their trust in Him.

16-17. *Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.*

"I mixed crying and singing together. I cried when I was in trouble, and I extolled the Lord as soon as He delivered me from it. Nay, by faith expecting to be delivered, I began to extol Him even while I was yet crying unto Him."

18-19. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: but verily God hath heard me;*

It is a blessed thing to be able to say that, and if you can truthfully say it, I pray you to say it, "Verily God hath heard me." Some people tell us that there is no such thing as an answer to prayer, they say that

it is a piece of superstition on our part. Well, I believe that I am as honest a man as anyone who denies the power of prayer, and I can truthfully say, “God hath heard me.” There are scores of us—there are hundreds of us—there are thousands of us who can stand in the witness box, and each one of us can say, “Verily God hath heard me.” If our testimony is not accepted by unbelieving men, we cannot help that. We know what we know, and we know that God has heard and answered our prayers again and again.

19-20. *He hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.*

ROMANS Chapter 8. Verse 1. *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

My hearers, we are each of us, by nature, under the condemnation of God. We are not only subject to condemnation, but we are condemned already, and on account of sin, there is judgment recorded in God’s book against every one of us, considered in our fallen state. But if we “are in Christ Jesus,” if we are made partakers of Jesus, if we have hidden ourselves in the cleft of the rock, Christ, and if our trust is solely in Him, oh, precious thought, “there is therefore now no condemnation” for us! It is blotted out. The old judgment that was recorded against us is now erased, and in God’s book of remembrance there is not to be found a single condemnatory syllable, nor one word of anger written against any believer in Christ Jesus. Glorious freedom from condemnation!

How may I know whether I have been thus set free? This is the question that should enter into each of our hearts. The answer is, “Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” My hearers, after which of these are you and I walking? Are we following the flesh? Are we seeking to please ourselves—to indulge our bodies, to gratify our lusts, to satisfy our own inclinations? If so, we are not in Christ Jesus, for those who are in Christ Jesus “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” and every one of you who is fleshly and carnal is not in Christ, but is still under condemnation.

2-3. *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:*

He did accomplish it. The law could not condemn sin so truly and so thoroughly as God did when He condemned sin in the person of Christ. O believer, let not your sins grieve you, however great or however tremendous they may have been, weep over them, but do not be distressed about them, for they have been condemned in Christ Jesus. They may have been enormous, but if you are in Him, Christ was punished for you, and God’s justice asks not for a second punishment for one offense.

Christ offered once a complete atonement for all believers, and if I am a believer in Him, there is no possible fear of my ever being condemned. There cannot be, for Christ was condemned for me, my sins were laid upon His head, and in the awful moment when He sustained the stroke of His Father’s vengeance, those sins ceased to be, and “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”

4. *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Mark again, how Paul brings us to this as the great evidence of our being in Christ Jesus—the not walking after the flesh. Now, every man as he is born into the world, left to himself, is sure to “walk after the flesh.” It is only the man who has the Spirit of God put into his soul, who has the heavenly gift from on high, who will “walk after the Spirit.” It is not talking after the flesh, but it is walking after it, that condemns us, and it is not talking after the Spirit that will save us, it is walking after the Spirit that is the evidence of salvation, not talking, but walking.

How many of you are there who are talkatives, who can talk religion and give us as much as we like of it, but whose life and conversation are not such as become godliness? “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” If you sow to the flesh, you “shall of the flesh reap corruption,” but if you sow to the Spirit, you “shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”

5-7. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God:*

That mind with which we are all born is enmity against God, and however much refined or polished a man may be, however amiable or polite, however he may shine amongst his fellow creatures, if he has not had a new heart and a right spirit, he is at “enmity against God,” and he cannot enter heaven until there has been a divine change wrought in him.

Some of you suppose because you have never been guilty of any vice, because you have not indulged in any great transgression, that therefore you do not require the work of regeneration in your hearts. You will be mightily mistaken if you continue under that delusion until the last great day.

“For to be carnally minded,” even though that carnal mind is in a body that is dressed in silks and satins, “To be carnally minded is death,” even though it is whitewashed till it looks like a spiritual one. “To be carnally minded,” even though you sow the carnal mind with a few good garden seeds of the flowers of morality, will still be nothing but damnation to you at the last. “To be carnally minded is death,” only “to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God.”

7. *For it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

The opponents of the free grace Gospel, which it is our delight to preach, assert that men can be saved if they will, and that men most certainly can repent, can believe, can come to God of their own free will, and that it is not through any defect in any powers that they have if they are not saved.

Now, we are not over prone to controvert that point, but at the same time, we do not understand the meaning of this verse if what they say is correct. It says here, “The carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” Some say that men could repent if it were their inclination. Exactly so, but that is what we assert—that it never will be and never can be their inclination, except they are constrained to do so by the grace of God.

Rowland Hill uses a very singular and odd metaphor in his “Village Dialogues.” Two parties are speaking together on this subject and one of them, pointing to the cat sitting on the hearth says, “Do you see that cat? She sits there, and licks her paws, and washes herself clean.” “I see that,” said the other. “Well,” said the first speaker, “did you ever hear of one of the hogs taken out of the sty that did so?” “No,” he said. “But he could if he liked,” said the other. Ah, verily, he could if he liked, but it is not according to his nature, and you never saw such a thing done, and until you have changed the swine’s nature, he cannot perform such a good action, and God’s Word says the same of man.

We do not care about fifty thousand aphorisms, or syllogisms, or anything else, God’s Word against man’s any day. Jesus said, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” “The carnal mind is enmity against God.” Men cannot come to Jesus, unless the Father draws them to Him.

We assert that from first to last, the work of salvation is all of grace, and we are not afraid of any licentious tendency of that doctrine, or anything of the kind. God’s Word, in all its simplicity, must be preached, and we leave Him to take care of His own truth. Blessed be God, this humbling truth is of far more use than the other doctrine, which puffs men up with pride, telling them that they can perform what most assuredly they cannot do. “It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

8. *So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.*

No man “in the flesh” can please God. Oh, what a sword this is—a sharp two-edged sword against many of you, my friends! Some of you who regularly attend this house of prayer, and others of you who stray in here in the evening, you “are in the flesh” and you “cannot please God.”

Perhaps you have been attempting to do it. You have said, “I will attend the house of prayer regularly.” You cannot please God by doing that, as long as you are “in the flesh.” You may be as moral as you please, and we beseech you so to be, but unless you have the Spirit of God, unless you are really changed in heart, and made new creatures in Christ Jesus, all that you can do, as long as you are “in the flesh, cannot please God.”

Virtues, in unregenerate men, are nothing but whitewashed sins. The best performance of an unchanged character is worthless in God's sight. It lacks the stamp of grace upon it, and that which has not the stamp of grace is false coin. Be it ever so beautiful in model and finish, it is not what it should be. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot praise God."

9. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

O beloved, we have need each of us to put ourselves in this scale! Come, preacher, be not too sure of your own salvation. Come, church member, do not be too certain of your own regeneration. Come, Christian, put yourself in this scale, "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." If he has not the Holy Ghost really dwelling in him, guiding him, directing him, teaching him, comforting him, supporting him, he is none of Christ's. And if we do not exhibit the Spirit of Christ in our character—if we have not gentleness, meekness, purity, holiness, benevolence, we are none of Christ's.

Ah, this will take some of your flimsy Christians to pieces. Half of your professors, we fear, will at the last be found not to have had "the Spirit of Christ." It is one thing to profess religion, beloved, it is quite another thing to possess vital godliness. We may sit down at the communion table, but oh! if we never had the Spirit of Christ, we "are none of his." We may plead our own goodness before the throne of God at the last, but Jesus Christ will say, "You have not my Spirit; you are none of mine," and then, however much we may have striven to serve God, unless we have the Spirit of Christ, there shall be nothing for us but the fearful curse, "Depart! Depart! Depart!"

"O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Let us ask Him for His Spirit, let us plead with Him for His grace, and though some of you have never had it, yet if you now ask for it, our God is a gracious God, full of mercy, and exceedingly full of pity, whosoever calls upon His name shall be saved, and though the chief of sinners, if you sincerely ask for pardon and for grace, you shall receive it at His hands. The Lord help you so to pray, for Jesus Christ's sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.